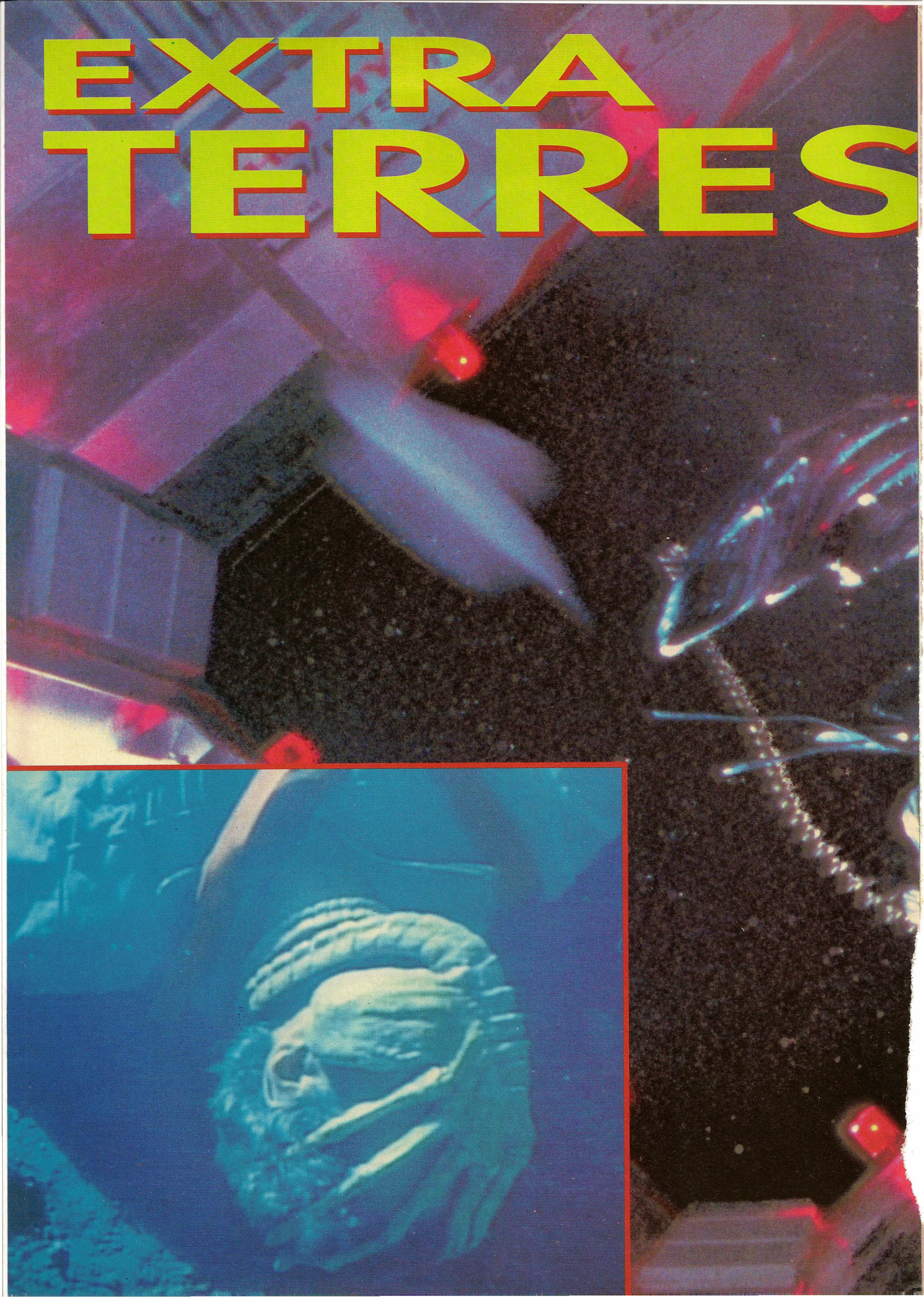


# EXTRA TERRES



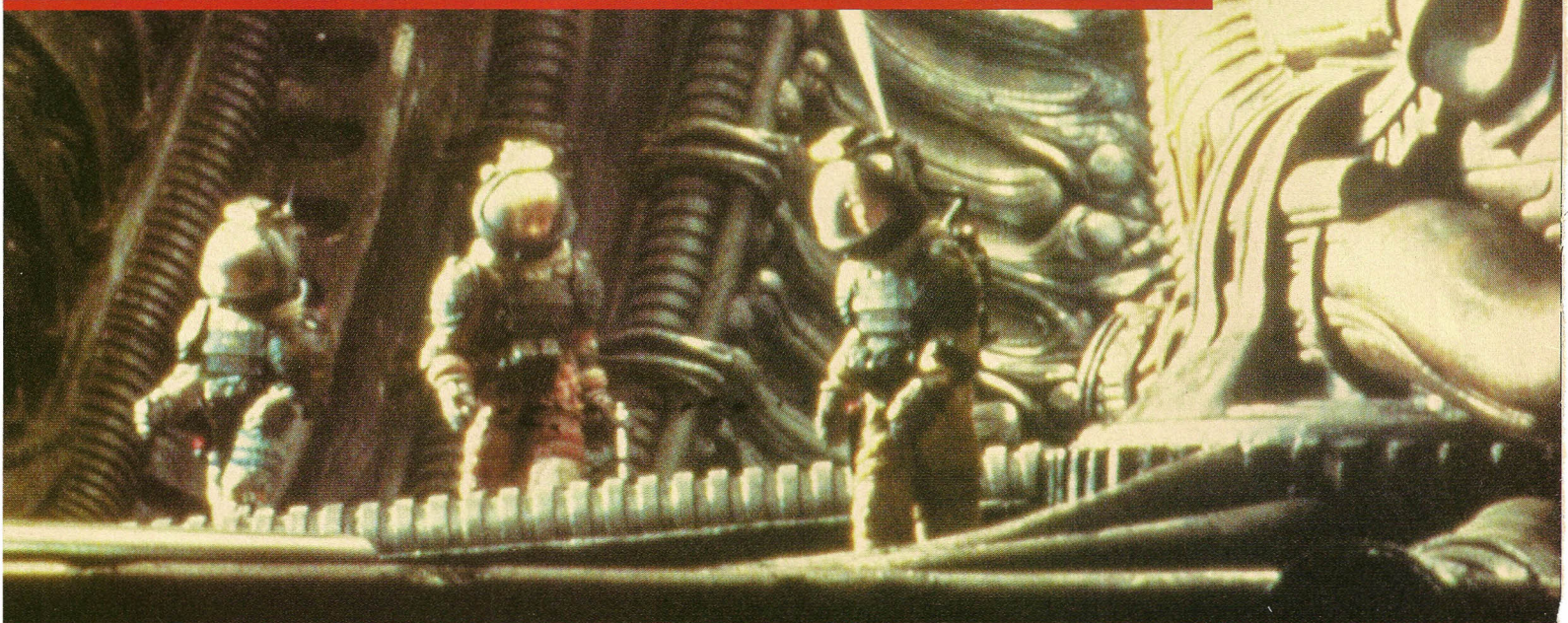
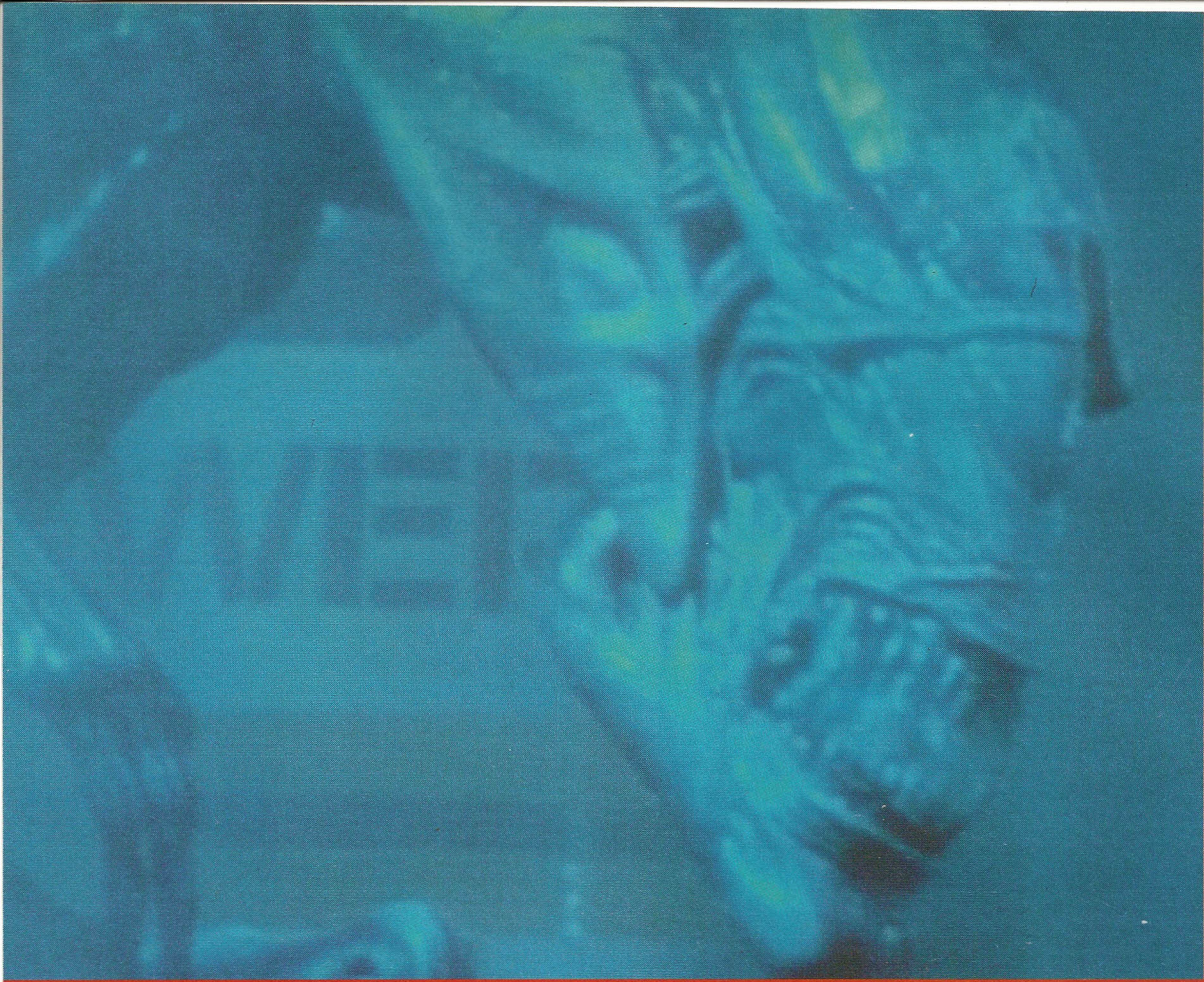




# TRIALS

If space is the final frontier then we must have crossed it with the amount we've given to *Aliens: The Special Edition*! We've waited so long for the extended version of James Cameron's classic to turn up on video that we felt its arrival could be heralded with nothing less than six pages of pics and info, well, we couldn't leave you screaming for more...





A couple of years ago, British horror and sci-fi fans were excited to hear of the impending release of *Aliens The Special Edition*, director James Cameron's definitive cut of his modern sci-fi classic. This was to feature a full seventeen minutes of extra footage cut from the movie at the time of its initial release in 1986.

But two weeks before the video was due to hit the streets, the release was cancelled due to a last-minute decision by top-level management in the States. CBS/Fox Video (who have now abandoned the CBS connection to become plain old Fox Video) got a huge pile of mail from disgruntled *Aliens*

fans, as did *Video World* and, we would presume, most other video consumer mags that had been trailering the release for a while beforehand. But Fox remained adamant about their decision and extremely tight-lipped about the reason for it.

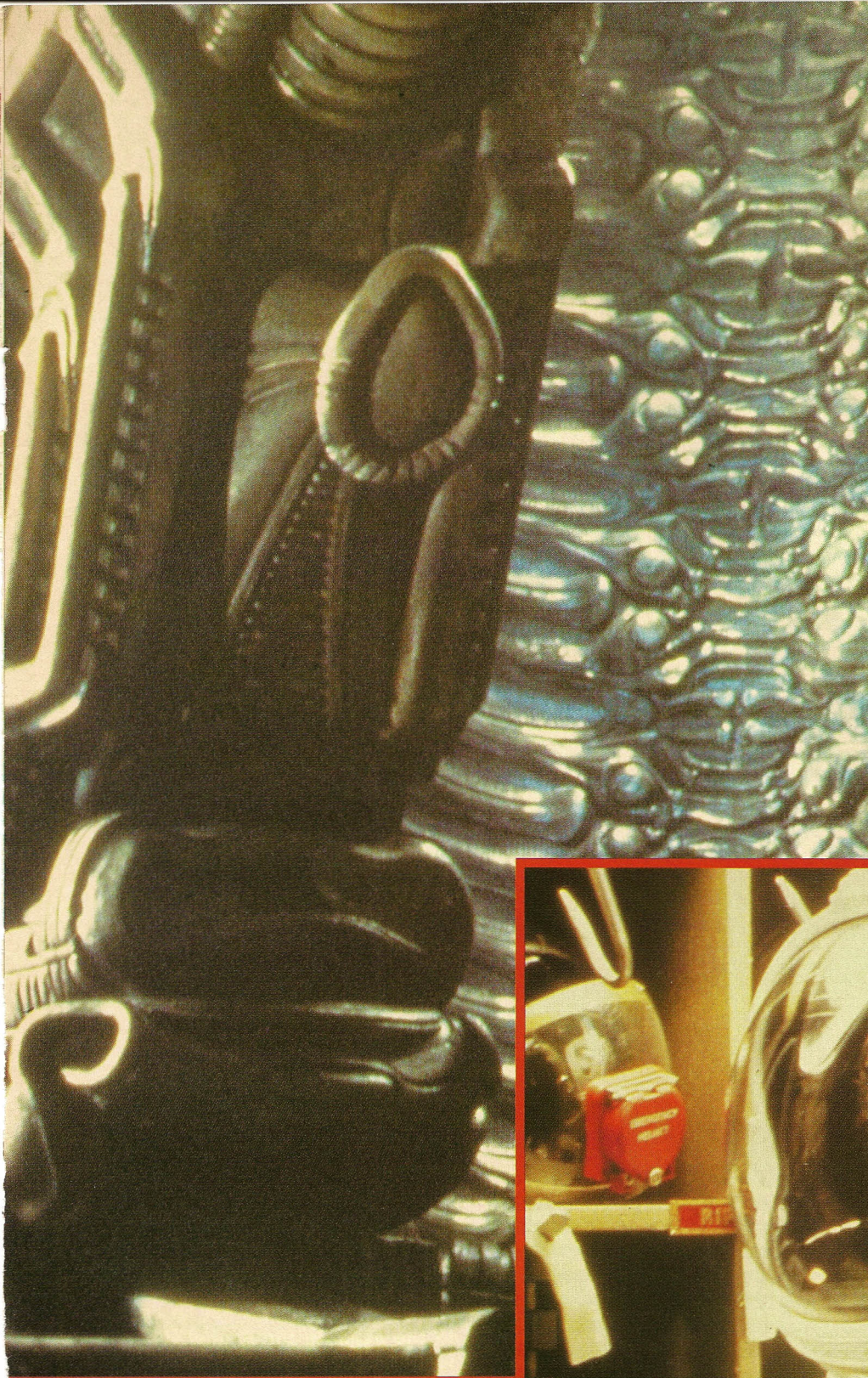
Stories started circulating about Sigourney Weaver having vetoed the expanded production for some reason, or was it possible that Cameron himself had had a change of heart? In fact neither was true. It now seems that Fox decided to keep *The Special Edition* in reserve as a curtain-raiser for the soon-to-be-released *Aliens III*. Thus, *Aliens Special Edition* will be in our video

shops next month but before examining just what extra we're going to be seeing, let's briefly recap on the *Aliens* saga so far.

First there was only one *Alien*. It was released in May of 1979 and proved to be a major hit for Fox, the same studio that had previously given the world *Star Wars*. Advance word was good - audiences were screaming their heads off at some of the more intense scenes and queues formed round the block on opening day. "It should be another hot summer at the Fox office" observed *Variety's* reviewer, and he wasn't wrong.

The first *Alien* movie was directed in our





*From Beyond Space*, in which a team of Earth astronauts made a stopover on an alien planet and picked up a monstrous hitchhiker (a papier-mache Martian portrayed by stuntman 'Crash' Corrigan!) which they spent the next 68 minutes trying desperately to get rid of! *Alien* was basically the same story, but embroidered with high-tech trimmings and state-of-the-art effects. A crew of astronauts landed on an eerie-mist-enshrouded planet in answer to a mysterious distress call and discovered a cache of giant green eggs - Edwina Currie eat your heart out! In a memorable shock scene, a crablike creature springs out of one of the eggs and attaches itself to spaceman John Hurt's face. The crew succeed in getting the thing off, but once they're in deep space poor old John starts getting stomach pains and.... well, you know the rest!

You don't? Well, this horrible lizard monster bursts its way out of Hurt's stomach in a scene that created quite a buzz when the film first opened. So did later encounters between the steadily decreasing members of the crew and the ever-more-fearsome alien, whose

own Shepperton Studios under a cloak of secrecy by Ridley Scott, a British film-maker who got his start shooting Hovis commercials. It was written by Dan O'Bannon, an old schoolmate of John Carpenter (O'Bannon is the guy who gets trapped in the lift shaft by an alien beach ball in Carpenter's *Dark Star*), and produced by Walter Hill, the expert action director who gave us such hits as *The Streetfighter* and *48Hrs*. Belonging more in the horror genre than science fiction, *Alien* was basically an 'old dark house' type movie set in outer space. In fact its lean plotline bore a remarkable resemblance to the story of a minor 50s 'B' pic called *It - The Terror*





## COMPETITION

10 COPIES OF *ALIENS: THE SPECIAL EDITION* TO BE WON

Ok, OK we know you've had to wait but *Aliens: The Special Edition* is finally on its way and to make up for the let downs you've had over the past few months we've got TEN copies of the tape to give away to the first out of the bag to tell us which 1991 blockbuster has recently been appearing at cinemas in a special extended version that's around four hours long. Get your answers into: Creature Comfort Comp., Video World Magazine, PO Box 381, Millharbour, London E14 9TW. Invade our space by March 6th.

weird 'bio-mechanical' design was based on the nightmarish drawings of macabre Swiss artist H.R. Giger. An important element of Ridley Scott's stylish direction was his clever use of misty camerawork and diffuse lighting. This obscured the audience's view of the alien creature, making it seem even more frightening, and heightening the terror and suspense of the piece in much the same way as Howard Hawks had done in his 1951 classic, *The Thing From Another World*.

Another key contributor to the first *Alien* was composer Jerry Goldsmith, whose intense score complemented the action so well it was nominated for an Oscar. It's not widely known, but Goldsmith also provided the 'voice' of the alien, blowing through a conch shell to produce this unearthly sound (he had used this effect years before in his award-winning soundtrack for *Planet Of The Apes*).

The few critics who didn't like the

picture pointed to its lack of decent characterisation. Most of the crew of the spaceship 'Nostromo' seemed to be there just as alien-fodder, with good actors like Hurt, Ian Holm and Tom Skerritt wasted in cardboard roles. But few could deny that Sigourney Weaver made an impact as the resourceful Ripley, who eventually figures out a way to outsmart the monster - even though the sombre conclusion does leave her drifting alone in space.

The film took so much money that it seems very strange that Fox waited seven years to concoct a sequel. Still, at least when they did they came up with a doozy! The superb sci-fi shocker, *Aliens* finally went before the cameras in 1986 under the extremely able direction of James Cameron, a former special effects technician who had started out working on Roger Corman cheapies like *Battle Beyond The Stars* and graduated swiftly to the bigtime via his electrifying direction of a sleeper

hit called *The Terminator*.

A great deal of the original movie's appeal was based around the novelty of audience's being kept in the dark as to the alien's identity until the final sequences. Realising that he couldn't do the same in the sequel, Cameron opted for non-stop action instead, turning his *Aliens* into a high-tech, souped-up war movie with gung-ho marines blasting special effects creatures in nearly every scene. Remember that Cameron also co-scripted *Rambo*...

There was no Rambo here, but there was a Rambess, Sigourney Weaver was back on board as one of the most convincing, exciting female action heroines anywhere in the cinema, and the film was an even bigger smash than the original, racking up an impressive \$42 million at the box-office.

*Aliens* opened where the last one ended, with Weaver's character of Ripley asleep in suspended animation



in the life pod out of which she blew the creature. Found by a salvage ship and brought back to earth, she discovers she has been in suspended animation for 57 years (and she doesn't look a day over 35!), and that the planet on which they found the alien creature has now been colonised. After much soul-searching, Ripley agrees to return there in company with a platoon of battle-hardened grunts whose job it will be to wipe out the alien infestation...

From there on in it's action all the way. Weaver is superb in the film, and she carefully studied her part for every nuance (her script was reportedly marked up in seventeen colours of ink), although she later expressed some dissatisfaction over the film's preoccupation with weaponry. By the way, it's intriguing to discover that the role of Ripley was originally created for a man - fortunately for

Weaver fans the makers of the first *Alien* changed their minds at the last minute!

The fact that the main role is played by a female has also influenced the way the series develops. In fact the main theme throughout the sequel is actually one of maternity, Weaver finds and adopts little orphan girl Newt (Carrie Henn) and thereafter seeks to protect her against the hordes of monsters, particularly the horrific 'Queen' alien, who she takes on woman-to-woman in the film's stirring finale, with a cry of "Leave her alone, you Bitch!"

Clocking in at 137 minutes on its original cinema release, *Aliens* was epic stuff. The seventeen minutes extra you can see in the revised *Special Edition* was left on the cutting room floor - the footage was trimmed in the first place because Cameron wanted to keep the narrative as tight as possible and didn't believe that audiences would sit still for a two and a half hour action movie.

According to Cameron: "The *Special Edition* of *Aliens* represents exactly what I think it would have been had there not been the constraints of exhibitors requiring a shorter film. There's no rule book on this thing, but the conventional wisdom is that two

hours is ideal, anything more than two hours starts to hurt, and anything beyond two hours twenty minutes is almost unheard of."

So just what will we be seeing 'extra' in *The Special Edition*?

Well, firstly there's a sequence where Ripley returns to Earth after 57 years in space and finds that her daughter has grown old and died. This is a bit of a choker to say the least and adds an extra resonance to Ripley's subsequent relationship with the orphan girl she rescues from the alien's clutches.

Another of the restored scenes shows Newt's father being attacked by an alien creature seeking a human host. We also get to see the thriving 'Terraformer' colony on the alien planet before just about everyone there is destroyed by the terrifying creatures. These scenes were chopped out by Cameron in the first place because he felt that they broke the audience's identification with the Ripley character's point of view.

"On the other hand," says Cameron. "I felt that I needed to give the audience that information, the Terraformer colony alive and bustling, with families hard at work, so that when we come back later and it's just dark, empty corridors there's a sense of shocking contrast with the thriving community

we saw earlier.'

Of course he's not the first one to produce a *Special Edition* of a popular movie. Spielberg did it with *Close Encounters* (which was 3 minutes shorter than the original, but with quite a lot of different footage) and American network TV showings of such blockbusters as *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* and *Superman* have had deleted scenes put back in to expand their running time. Of course in the end nobody is going to want to see more of a bad movie (personally my bum got very numb in the interminable 'normal' edition of the *Star Trek* movie!) But *Aliens* was and is undoubtedly a classic, and *The Special Edition* offers fans of this great movie a chance to enjoy a little bit more of it as *Aliens* fever starts building in anticipation of *Aliens III*, due in our cinemas this summer after more false starts than a one-legged sprinter...

The plot of *Aliens III*? We knew you'd ask. We did, too, but Fox aren't talking. All we know for sure is that it stars Sigourney Weaver again, (this time sporting a hairstyle that would make Kojak wince), and that we'll be in the queue when it opens in UK cinemas. In the meantime, enjoy *Aliens: The Special Edition* - it really is eggcellent!

